

Natural Resources, Environment and Great
Lakes Committee

Testimony

November 8, 2012



National Wolfwatcher Coalition

<http://wolfwatcher.org>

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Dear Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today.

My name is Nancy Warren and I am the Great Lakes Regional Director for the National Wolfwatcher Coalition. We are all-volunteer, nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting positive attitudes about wolves through education. The National Wolfwatcher Coalition opposes SB 1350.

SB 1350 states that the use of hunting as a management tool is necessary, "to minimize human and gray wolf encounters and to prevent gray wolves from threatening or harming humans, livestock and pets." This is certainly misleading.

Senator Casperson and even some providing testimony would like you to believe that wolves are rampantly killing livestock and pets, while owners are forced to standby helplessly. We urge you to look at the facts.

I am a resident of the Western U.P. and my home is located nearly equidistant between two farms, in prime wolf habitat surrounded by the Ottawa National Forest. Wolves and other predators often use our property and we take reasonable precautions to keep our pets safe by insuring they are always under our control. In 2001, the producer to my east had a depredation of a cow. Shortly thereafter, he obtained two guard dogs; he also maintains his fencing and keeps his calves in the barnyard. Although he still sees and hears wolves, he has had no other wolf depredations.

The producer to my west has a long history of depredation problems from a variety of predators including bears, coyotes, bobcat and more recently wolves. In 2010 (53%) and 2011 (43%) of all the wolf depredations in the U.P. were on this farm. Simply hunting wolves in the U.P. will not resolve this producer's predation problems.

Livestock producers are compensated for verified losses caused by wolves and since delisting are issued landowner permits to kill problem wolves. Livestock producers and dog owners can also kill wolves, without a permit, that are in the act of attacking their livestock or dog.

Through a federal grant, 20 donkeys have been placed on farms and fencing has been purchased for seven farms. These and other non-lethal measures have proven to be effective in reducing wolf depredation.

Killing livestock is a learned behavior and most wolf packs do not cause depredation problems. Only 7% of the 900 working U.P. farms have experienced a verified wolf depredation. The best way to manage problem wolves when non-lethal measures fail is to insure producers follow best management practices and to target the wolves responsible for the depredation. Research shows that randomly killing wolves not responsible for depredation can actually cause depredation to increase.

Over the past 17 years, there have been 68 dogs killed by wolves. Nearly all were hounds pursuing game on public lands.

Since federal delisting nine months ago, at least 25 wolves have been legally killed under DNR's current authority, including eight wolves, killed this spring in Ironwood. The wolves were attracted to a residential area by persons feeding deer and the wolves were killed as a proactive measure; no one was threatened by the wolves.

There are some who argue that a recreational wolf hunting/trapping season will increase social acceptance for the wolf. Just look at the states where the hunting and trapping of wolves is allowed and you will see the hatred for the wolf is just as strong as ever where slogans such as "Smoke a pack a day" and "Kill em all" abound. In Michigan alone, at least 62 wolves have been illegally killed since 1999.

No doubt you have heard from some constituents frustrated with wolves. Some have real concerns such as loss of livestock, others fear for what might happen; others are misinformed on the impact of wolves on deer; while others are unaware of the ecological benefits of wolves. Attitude surveys show the majority of U.P. residents support wolf recovery.

Senator Casperson has attempted to justify the need for designating the wolf as a game animal stating that wolf numbers have far exceeded population goals. He is mistaken. The approved wolf management plan does not identify a target population size, nor does it establish an upper limit for the number of wolves in the State.

The fact that Wisconsin and Minnesota have established a wolf hunting/trapping season is not a scientific reason for Michigan to institute one.

We also question why SB 1350 assesses a penalty of only \$200-\$1000 for illegally killing a wolf and believe the penalties should be elevated to that for illegally taking an elk or moose.

With all the non-lethal and lethal measures available to target and control problem wolves, there is no scientific evidence to support the need for a recreational wolf hunting season or for designating the wolf a game animal. We ask that you consider the input of our 1470 supporters who have sent emails and urge you to reject SB 1350.

Respectfully submitted,

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